

US-USSR Environmental Protection Agreement
Section V. - Nature and Preserves
Working Group-Marine Mammals
Activities Report-December 1973 to Present

TO
Ray
Ponder

The second meeting of the Working Group on Marine Mammals was held in Washington, D. C. on December 2-12, 1973. A resume of the meeting is attached as Appendix A.

On the day before the December 1973 meeting of the US-USSR Working Group, the U.S. delegation selected a Steering-Planning Committee composed of:

Dr. Robert V. Miller

Dr. George Y. Harry, Jr.

Mr. John J. Burns

Dr. Robert Elsner

Environment

Nature & Preserves

This committee met at the University of Alaska on April 30, 1974, to discuss plans for the proposed fall meeting of the Working Group in Moscow, and also to begin developing long-range plans for cooperative research. At the April meeting, the Resume of the December 1973 session of the Marine Mammal Working Group was discussed, plans and assignments suggested for the 1974 meeting in the USSR, and a beginning made toward developing a long-range plan.

A framework around which a long-range plan could be developed was discussed and a draft summary is attached as Appendix B.

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In addition, during June 1974, Dr. Francis Fay and Mr. John Burns traveled to the Soviet Union under Working Group auspices, to carry out working visits to museums and laboratories where seal and walrus studies are being conducted or specimen materials are housed.

They were able to examine a substantial amount of the available skeletal material at the University of Moscow Museum and also at the Museum of the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad. Unfortunately, Mr. Burns was not able to visit several key laboratories because of their location in "sensitive" areas.

The U.S. side proposed a postponement of the next meeting of the Working Group scheduled for fall 1974, to spring 1975. This would allow for review of two cooperative projects, one involving exchange of U.S. scientists participating in a Soviet whale marking expedition (January-February 1975) and the other exchange of Soviet scientists to work on porpoise biology at the National Marine Fisheries Service Laboratory in La Jolla, California during April 1975. This postponement has recently been agreed to by the Soviet Side Coordinator, V. Zemsky.

Development of the long-range planning proposal will proceed this fall and winter in anticipation of forwarding to the Soviet side at least 3 months prior to the Working Group meeting next spring.

Resume of the Meeting of the Marine Mammal Subgroup
for
The Agreement on Conservation of Rare and Endangered Species of
Animals and Plants and General Wildlife Conservation and Management

In accordance with the agreement between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. for cooperation in the field of environmental conservation, a meeting of the Marine Mammal Subgroup was held in Washington, D. C., from December 2-12, 1973. The following members participated. For the U.S.S.R.: V. A. Zemsky, A. A. Berzin, A. S. Sokolov, and V. N. Mineyev. For the U.S.: R. V. Miller, J. Burns, R. Elsner, G. C. Ray, F. Fay, G. Y. Harry, C. H. Fiscus, A. H. Johnson, W. E. Schevill, and J. R. Blum.

1. After the call to order by the Chairman, Dr. Robert V. Miller, the agenda for the meeting was adopted. A copy of the agenda is attached. In the course of the meeting the following subjects were discussed.

2. J. Blum and V. Mineyev discussed the status of marine mammal conservation in the U.S., and V. Mineyev also discussed current regulations of the harvest of these animals in the U.S.S.R.

In the course of the discussions it was decided to combine this agenda item with agenda item 5.

Catch statistics with reference to North Pacific marine mammals were also exchanged. Regulations relating to the conservation of marine mammals were also exchanged.

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3. Scientific publications were exchanged. At each future meeting of the subgroup, principal publications of scientific reports and a complete list of publications since the previous meeting will be exchanged for the purpose of informing both sides as promptly as possible about work accomplished and receiving appropriate materials on questions of interest.

4. As indicated under agenda item 2, statistical data concerning the harvests of marine mammals in the North Pacific were exchanged. The U.S. presented a table of total annual harvest data for the period 1968 through 1972 for the following species:

Belukha Whale
(D. leucas)

Bowhead Whale
(B. mysticetus)

Walrus
(O. rosmarus)

Pacific Common Seal
(P. vitulina)

Sea Lion
(E. jubatus)

Polar Bear
(U. maritimus)

Sea Otter
(E. lutris)

Fur Seal
(C. ursinus)

Ice seals (including Ringed, Bearded, Ribbon, and Spotted Seals)

The Soviet side also provided statistical data concerning the harvest of marine mammals for the period 1965-72 inclusively. It was agreed to exchange, insofar as possible, harvest data for 1973, in March 1974 at the annual meeting of the Fur Seal Commission.

5. Was discussed earlier as reported under agenda item 2.

6. Both parties agree to exchange standard forms used in each country for recording measurements of pinnipeds and cetaceans and forms for recording observations of marine mammal sightings at sea,

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and to communicate their comments regarding such forms by July 1, 1974. Both parties consider it necessary to study and improve the methods and technology of marking pinnipeds and cetaceans for research purposes.

The two sides have agreed to develop the necessary standard methods for physiological and morphological studies and to discuss them at the next meeting of the working subgroup for the purpose of working out uniform methods.

7. The U.S. and Soviet sides agree to continue national programs and exchange research results on gray whales (Eschrichtius robustus) in 1974, and to reconsider cooperative gray whale research at next year's meeting.

The U.S. and Soviet sides agree to continue national programs and exchange research results on bowhead whales (Balaena mysticetus) in 1974, and to reconsider cooperative bowhead whale research at next year's meeting.

Both sides agreed that all available data and the data that will be received in 1974 on Belukha (Delphinapterus leucas) will be exchanged and discussed at the next meeting of the marine mammal subgroup.

Both sides have agreed to include northern sea lions, sea otter, and Pacific common seals in the framework of this subgroup, and to exchange information and program plans on these species at the next subgroup meeting.

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8. The U.S. described preliminary methods of assessing walrus populations with relation to ice and weather dynamics in the Bering and Chukchi Seas using photographic and infra-red scanning techniques. The U.S. issued a tentative invitation to the Soviet side to cooperate in further development of these techniques in 1975 and suggested that it would be desirable for each country to provide a plane and a vessel, the latter to gather ground truth data in conjunction with air flights. The U.S. suggested that materials regarding this tentative proposal be exchanged at the June 1974, Theriological Congress in Moscow and at the meeting to discuss research in the fall of 1974.

The Soviet side agreed in principle but could not give a final answer with regard to cooperation with the U.S. tentative proposal. The U.S. side will take steps to contact the appropriate Soviet^{and American}/organizations (which organized the Bering Sea expedition) for the purpose of discussing the possibility of carrying out cooperative research. The Soviet side in its turn will contact the appropriate Soviet organizations in order to discuss the possibilities of carrying out research in cooperation with the U.S. side.

The U.S. side stated that it plans to carry out an aerial walrus survey in the fall of 1974 to obtain walrus population and distribution

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data. The Soviet side will communicate with the U.S. side (Dr. Zemsky to Dr. Miller) in early 1974 with regard to the possibility of coordinated flights.

9. The investigations of systematics, distribution and ecology of Pacific common seals and walrus by John J. Burns and Francis H. Fay were considered very worthwhile and were highly recommended for continuation by both sides.

Work on this project in 1974 will include working visits to museums in Leningrad and Moscow by U.S. scientists (Burns and Fay) to study osteological material. The Soviet side agrees to help expedite these visits and to examine the possibilities of organizing an expedition for the joint study of distribution, morphology, and biological characters of the "insularis" form of Phoca vitulina from the Kuril Islands, southeastern Kamchatka and the Commander Islands.

10. A plan for further investigations of heavy metals and their metabolism in marine mammals was submitted by Bruce Mate, Oregon State University. That plan requires comparison of seals from fresh and marine waters. Dr. Mate will inform Dr. Zemsky of exactly which tissues he needs and how they should be taken and handled; Dr. Zemsky will then advise Dr. Mate about the possibility of obtaining such materials.

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11 Dr. R. L. Elsner proposed further collaboration with Soviet colleagues in early 1975 in the field of physiology and morphology of seals. The Soviet side recognized the worthwhile nature of the studies. Both sides agreed to conduct discussions in 1974 on the kinds and extent of possible collaborative work that can be done, including providing marine mammal fetuses for physiological studies to be carried out by J. L. Kooyman of Scripps Institution at La Jolla, California.

12 In implementation of the decisions of the working group meeting, the Soviet side will send a vessel suitable for tagging whales to the eastern part of the Central Pacific in November 1974, for a cruise of four to five months. The U.S.S.R. plans to mark commercial species of whales with Discovery tags and invited two U.S. scientists to take part for all or part of the cruise. The U.S. is developing a radio tag for tracking whales and is experimenting with methods of attachment. The U.S.S.R. agreed that radio tagging of whales can be tried if the equipment is ready. Further planning for the whale tagging expedition will be done immediately following the March 1974 Meeting of the Fur Seal Commission in Ottawa, Canada. The U.S. agreed to

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send scientists aboard the U.S.S.R. vessel to participate actively in the research program. The U.S. side will attempt to provide a vessel or plane for tracking radio-tagged whales.

- 13 The Soviet side commented on the agenda for the planned meeting in the Soviet Union on Biology and Conservation of North Pacific Walrus to be held in the fourth quarter of 1974. At that meeting we will discuss the possibility and need for preparing a temporary draft convention on conservation of walrus and ice seal species considering the corresponding biological material. The discussions regarding the draft convention will include, but will not be limited to, the following subjects for each species of concern:

- a. Biology and population dynamics including distribution and migration
- b. The tropho-energetic characteristics of marine mammal populations
- c. Specific food requirements and food inter-relationships among the species of concern
- d. Relationships of marine mammals to other natural resources

The meeting will take place in Leningrad or Moscow. The agenda for the Walrus discussion is attached:

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I. Description of the general objectives of U.S.S.R.-U.S.
Walrus Program.

II. Discuss present knowledge of population and exchange of
materials. To include:

Population abundance and trend

Seasonal distribution and composition of populations

Seasonal activity and behavior

Biological characteristics:

 physiology and morphology

 age of maturity

 age specific pregnancy rates

 feeding habits

 ecology

 diseases and parasites

III. Identify directions of research of high priority.

IV. Develop plans to carry out research:

 aerial survey

 surface observations (e.g., from vessels, etc.)

 techniques; such as telemetry, remote sensing,

 marking, etc.

V. Protection and Regulations.

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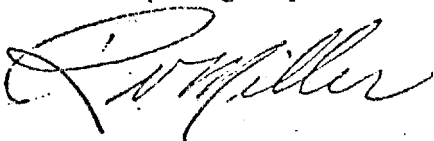
14 The two sides stated that, to date, this Subgroup has not addressed the problem of long-range research planning. The two sides agreed to exchange draft proposals of the long-range research projects at least two months in advance of the next meeting of this subgroup. The two sides will discuss these plans at the subgroup meeting.

The next subgroup meeting will take place in the Soviet Union in the fourth quarter of 1974 in conjunction with the planned Walrus Symposium. Exact dates and location of the meeting will be determined in the first half of 1974 by correspondence. This does not preclude the possibility of an earlier meeting by agreement between the sides.

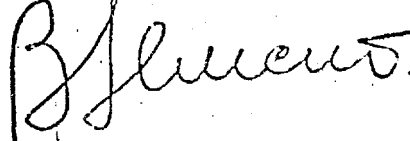
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15 A proposal of the U.S. side was also discussed and is attached here as annex I. This resume of the Fall 1973 Marine Mammal Subgroup Meeting is approved by representatives of the U.S. and U.S.S.R. in Washington, D. C., December 11, 1973.

For the U.S. component
of the Subgroup



For the Soviet component
of the Subgroup



Annex I.

Additional U.S. Proposals for Cooperative U.S.-U.S.S.R.

Marine Mammal Research

The U.S. side suggested the following three additional cooperative research projects not specifically discussed as a part of the agenda.

1. A Soviet scientist was invited to take part in studies of the systematics and morphology of porpoises collected by the National Marine Fisheries Service laboratory in Southern California.
2. Soviet scientists were invited to participate in studies of the populations and behavior of gray whales on the breeding grounds in Mexico, tentatively planned for 1975.
3. A Soviet scientist was invited to take part in studies of fur seal-northern sea lion relationships on the Pribilof Islands which will start in 1974.

Dates of stay and distribution of expenses for the stay of the Soviet scientists will have to be worked out by correspondence for each individual case.

The Soviet side expressed interest in these three suggestions but could not give an immediate answer. The suggestions will be considered by the Soviets in planning future research. The possibilities of implementation will be discussed by correspondence.

MARINE MAMMAL SUBGROUP
WORKING GROUP ON WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

December 3 to 12, 1973

TENTATIVE AGENDA

1. Call to order - Dr. Robert V. Miller
 - a. Address of welcome (name to be furnished by Dr. Miller)
 - b. Announcements by Dr. Miller
 - c. Discussion of tentative agenda.
2. Status of Marine Mammal Conservation in the U.S. - Mr. Joseph R. Blum.
3. Exchange of publications.

Discussion of copying and translating exchange publications.
4. Exchange of catch statistics and plans for future exchanges on walrus, ice seals, gray whale, bowhead whale, and beluga whale.
5. Exchange of conservation and management regulations and discussion of their interpretation.
6. Standardization of research techniques for collection of data on ice seals; including measurements, weight, age, reproductive condition and food studies.
7. Discussion of 1974 and 1975 field research on ice seals, gray whales, bowhead whales, and beluga whales; including population assessment, distribution and seasonal movements.

8. Evaluation of technology for assessment of walrus in relation to dynamics of pack ice.
 - a. Bering Sea Marine Mammal Experiment.
 - b. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife - Walrus Research Program.
 - c. Joint US-USSR aerial surveys in 1975.
9. Investigations of systematics and distribution of North Pacific harbor seals (Phoca vitulina) and walruses (Odobenus rosmarus).
10. Residual toxicants and their metabolism in marine mammals.
11. Studies of functional morphology and trophoenergetics of marine mammals.
12. Whale marking of sei, fin, and sperm whales in the northern Pacific Ocean and expansion of research effort on whale wintering grounds.
13. Discussion of 1974 meeting to be held in the Soviet Union on walrus and the possibility of preparing a Temporary Draft Convention on Conservation of Walrus and Ice Seals.
14. Possible future meetings of Marine Mammal Subgroup.
15. Preparation of resumé of December 1973 meeting of Marine Mammal Subgroup.

Approved For Release 2001/08/27 : CIA-RDP79-00798A000700060004-1

SUMMARY OF INFORMATIONAL COMMUNIQUE ON
DEVELOPMENT OF LONG-RANGE PLANProposed Objectives

Objectives of the US-USSR Cooperative Marine Mammal Program are to foster and promote the continuing exchange of ideas, information, and personnel necessary for the successful and mutually beneficial management of marine mammals and the marine environment which supports them.

Implementation:

To achieve the objectives indicated above, it is recommended that programs ranging from the exchange of published reports and data to joint field studies involving an exchange of scientists, be considered in five major fields of involvement as follows:

1. Natural history of marine mammal species.
2. Marine mammal population status and trends.
3. Marine mammal ecology.
4. Basic research including morphology, physiology, taxonomy, and systematics.
5. Conservation of marine mammals (ultimately based on knowledge obtained in the four preceding areas of involvement).

In identifying these fields of involvement it will be easier to plan long-range programs of mutual interest, directed at specific problems. One example would be determination of the number of bowhead whales in the Bering and Chukchi Seas.

The geographical areas of involvement have yet to be decided. It is suggested that careful consideration be given to: 1) the Bering, Chukchi, and Okhotsk Seas (with pinnipeds as the initial subjects of interest); 2) the North Pacific Ocean (great whales); 3) possibly Antarctica (both pinnipeds and large cetaceans).

The five major fields of involvement include almost any phase of cooperative research on marine mammals that might be carried out with Soviet scientists. Each of the major fields listed is being expanded into a proposal for a long-range plan to be discussed at the November meeting in the USSR.